

Western Montana Addiction Services, Inc.
Turning Point Addiction Services, Inc.
1325 Wyoming St.
Missoula, MT 59801

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EXHIBIT *Other Information*
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HB 2

406-532-9800

FAX 406-541-3032

Honorable Teresa Henry, Chair
The Appropriations Joint Sub-Committee on Human Services
Montana State Legislature
Capitol Building
Helena, MT 59620

February 5, 2009

Dear Chairwoman Henry and Honorable Members of the Joint Sub-Committee on Human Services,

For the past two bienniums, the Legislature has directed approximately \$410,000 of the tobacco dollars overseen by the MTUPP Advisory Council for community-based prevention to AMDD (Addictive & Mental Disorders Division) to grant communities across the state that has provided funding for evidenced-based prevention approaches, including Media Literacy.

Prior to this current session, the Council has apparently made a decision to drop *Media Literacy* as a priority approach and put more money into tobacco cessation. While I agree that tobacco cessation is an important strategy, and one which already has money directed toward those efforts, I feel it is critical that we include early prevention efforts, such as Media Literacy and related best practices, as a multiple strategy approach to Montana's tobacco prevention efforts.

As a recipient of one of those grants, and grants manager for the Missoula MTUPP grant for the past four years, I would implore you to continue to earmark approximately \$500,000 of those funds to AMDD. I do so based on the positive impact we have seen in reducing tobacco and other drug use in Missoula through this grant. Our community receives approximately \$75,000 per year through these dollars and we are able to accomplish a lot with that relatively small amount of money. Let me explain. Western MT Addiction Services receives the grant, but partners with our county prevention coalition – The Missoula Forum for Children & Youth, The Missoula County Health Department and The Flagship Program (after-school in 11 schools) – our own agency's primary prevention program. The money we receive has been shared amongst those partner organizations. The Flagship Program targets 6th and 8th graders with after-school programs using best practices- *All Stars* and *Project Northland*- to educate youth about advertising and how it affects their choices, with the purpose of preventing or at least, delaying age of onset of drug use and its many negative consequences. Flagship reaches approximately 1,000 students per year through these activities. The Forum does a community "environmental" approach through the grant, to educate the public on the ill effects of drug use through bill-board ads and community presentations that reach approximately 60,000 people per year. The Health Department piece has involved media literacy presentations to 7th and 9th graders county-wide, reaching approximately 2,000 youth per year. Our pre-post survey data through each of these strategies is showing positive results. Additionally, results of the state MPNA (MT Prevention Needs Assessment) survey, which Missoula has tracked over the past ten years, show that the age of onset for tobacco and alcohol use has risen and fewer teens are using alcohol and tobacco.

AMDD has Prevention Specialists trained in these strategies state-wide. So the expertise and evaluation using strategies around Media Literacy as an effective prevention strategy are in place and working.

Please assure that these important and effective programs continue by allocating (as in the past two sessions) \$500,000 of the MTUPP funds to AMDD. These funds are not currently in the AMDD budget, due to the change in emphasis by the MTUPP Advisory Council, so would have to be reinstated into the AMDD budget.

I would be happy to supply you with additional information about our program approach, Media Literacy and the results of our surveys at your request. Or please feel free to contact me at (406) 532-9827.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter as you continue your difficult job of putting together a cost-effective budget during these difficult economic times. Your service to our state and its children and families is greatly appreciated!

Sincerely yours,



Rosie Buzzas, Director

The Flagship Program and

Director of Prevention Services at WMAS

Contact Info:

Address: 1325 Wyoming , Missoula, MT 59801

Phone: (406) 532-9827 (O) or (406) 370 - 3604 (Cell)

Email: rbuzzas@wmmhc.org